

ERIE COUNTY HAZMAT TEAM ASSISTS IN GOWANDA FLOOD RESPONSE

August 12, 2009

Gowanda, NY – In the aftermath of severe flooding which caused extensive damage to communities in Erie and Cattaraugus counties, the Erie County Hazardous Materials Response Team (EC-HMRT) was called in to support recovery efforts at Tri-County Memorial Hospital.

The hospital, which was evacuated in the early stages of the flood event, suffered extensive floodwater damage and was subsequently closed indefinitely.



Initial salvage and clean-up efforts at the hospital were halted due to concerns over the presence of multiple hazardous materials including medical waste, chemicals, and compressed gas cylinders.

Specialists from the Erie Co. team, aided by members of the Cattaraugus Co. HazMat Team and the NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control entered the hospital in specialize protective clothing to identify and contain hazards.

Efforts focused primarily on securing hazards within the hospital so that recovery contractors could begin work on salvaging patient medical records, which had to be salvaged within a specified time-frame or they would be permanently lost.

EC-HMRT logged over 100 man-hours during this response.

Founded in 1989, EC-HMRT is an all-volunteer team of approximately 50 members and responds as a function of the Erie County Departments of Health and Emergency Services. EC-HMRT is on call 24/7/365 for any incident requiring a hazmat response, dispatching via the Medical Emergency Radio Service of Erie County (MERS). The team is available to respond to incidents in all municipalities of Erie County free of charge.